



**AARP Wisconsin Meeting  
Friday, October 22, 2004, 2:30 p.m.**

People in attendance

Don McCloskey, Wisconsin Retired Educator's Association Volunteer  
Mary Jo Rimkus, AARP Wisconsin Volunteer, Transportation Representative  
Gail Sumi, AARP Wisconsin, Government Affairs Representative  
Casey Newman, WisDOT Bureau of Planning  
Jonquil Johnston, WisDOT Bureau of Planning

1. Overview of long-range plan by WisDOT staff: The meeting began at 2:30. Casey Newman gave an overview of WisDOT's upcoming long-range transportation plan, *Connections 2030* (C2030). WisDOT is currently seeking input on transportation planning issues from stakeholder groups and larger Wisconsin cities. Plan alternatives should be available for public comment in July of 2005. The plan is scheduled to be completed in 2006.
2. Gathering of input from AARP Wisconsin representatives: AARP Wisconsin provided WisDOT staff with a folder of publications that reference the organization's positions. Please note somewhere that AARP Wisconsin membership is for those 50 and older and that AARP Wisconsin has 755,000 members in Wisconsin.
3. Discussion focused on the following issues:
  - a. AARP Wisconsin's Coalition  
AARP Wisconsin noted they work with a coalition of partner organizations, including Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (CWAG), 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, and Wisconsin Urban and Rural Transit Association (WURTA), to address the shortage of alternative transportation resources for those persons who can no longer drive.
  - b. Connections 2030 Corridors  
WisDOT staff explained the corridor concept that will be used in *Connections 2030*. AARP Wisconsin noted transportation needs in Wisconsin are often perceived as being "Milwaukee-centric" and wondered if the corridor concept would exacerbate this perception. WisDOT noted the corridors are regional in nature and were identified based on providing transportation services between travel destination points. For example, the corridors that include Milwaukee stretch to the Fox Cities, Green Bay, Madison, and other destinations.

c. Transportation Alternatives for the Elderly

AARP Wisconsin stated one of their major transportation concerns is providing safe, affordable, and time-efficient transportation alternatives for the elderly population. When elderly people do not have the option to drive, they risk being isolated from their social network and trips to the grocery store, doctor, church, and other needs become difficult. AARP Wisconsin stated many elderly citizens are faced with planning casual trips to run errands a week or more in advance because of lack of services and high costs for personal transit services. For AARP Wisconsin, independence is critical for their members. Once older people begin to lose that independence, their overall quality of life begins to decline. Adequate transportation is a key part of maintaining an independent elderly population.

AARP Wisconsin sees a need for more coordination of transportation services. They would like to see a centrally coordinated transportation network throughout the state that coordinates trips. A centralized call center would connect the caller with the best type of transportation available. They see opportunities to use fleet vehicles during the day for elderly transportation when the vehicles would otherwise be idle. Examples include paratransit and transit providers, car pool vans, school buses, etc, used during their off peak times for riding sharing services.

AARP Wisconsin would like to see more coordination and consistency of transit and paratransit services. They noted Dunn County, Wisconsin is a good model for transit services. They also noted that the Department of Health and Family Services has a proposal for a transit broker for coordination purposes. They encouraged providers to use existing aging group networks to publicize any new programs (the internet is not a commonly used tool at this point).

AARP Wisconsin stated their support for bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

d. Economic Impacts of Not Serving the Elderly Population

AARP Wisconsin cited a recent study by the Surface Transportation Policy Project, of which AARP is a part, found economic losses when the elderly population does not have adequate access to transportation. Older non-drivers have a decreased ability to participate in the community and the economy. Compared with older drivers, older non-drivers in the United States make: 15% fewer trips to the doctor; 59% fewer shopping trips and visits to restaurants; 65% fewer trips for social, family and religious activities. The study also showed increased healthcare costs for both physical and mental (usually depression) conditions that result from increased isolation. More information on this study may be obtained by visiting [http://www.transact.org/library/reports\\_html/seniors/aging\\_executive\\_summary.htm](http://www.transact.org/library/reports_html/seniors/aging_executive_summary.htm)

e. Transit

AARP Wisconsin advocates transit user education. They feel it is unlikely the elderly will use buses and other transit options when they are no longer able to drive if they have never used transit before. AARP Wisconsin feels the elderly (and general population) would benefit from more user-friendly transit systems.

AARP Wisconsin noted their support for train and streetcar options.

They also noted that stop and transfer shelters are necessary. All populations need a safe place to wait for the bus.

They stated that fixed route transit does not work well for elderly populations. They said door-to-door service, while expensive, is needed. AARP Wisconsin would like to see better implementation of new technologies so that door-to-door transportation service is more efficient.

f. Aging in Place and Smart Growth

A current trend AARP Wisconsin sees is “aging in place.” Elderly residents wish to maintain their independence, but they do not plan for aging when they choose housing. Consequently, many aging persons live in neighborhoods that are not easily accessed by transit, if at all. This trend is of particular significance in the rural parts of Wisconsin.

Related to this is the issue of senior housing locations. Like most private developers, the builders of senior housing are attracted to cheap land, most often on the periphery of a community. AARP Wisconsin sees many senior housing complexes that are sited out of the current reach of transit and often are not within walking distance to groceries, medical facilities, churches, and other services. AARP Wisconsin has a livability agenda that includes smart growth concepts, land use planning, and coordination between municipalities and developers.

g. User-Friendly Transportation

AARP Wisconsin advocates improved signage, longer walk signs at intersections, more prominent lane markings, and other features to make the transportation system more user-friendly and safer.

h. Driver Licensing

AARP Wisconsin advocates the availability for driving licensing testing at all ages. They noted that not everyone ages the same way and age is not indicative of ability to drive.